

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

291157Z Oct 03

UNCLAS ABUJA 001864

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: SENATE BRIBERY SCANDAL FOLLOW-UP

REF: ABUJA 1728

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, NOT FOR PUBLICATION ON THE INTERNET OR INTRANET.

[11.](#) (SBU) On October 9, 68 members present of the 109-member Senate unanimously voted to drop consideration of bribery accusations by FCT Minister Malam El-Rufai against Deputy Senate President Ibrahim Mantu and Majority Leader Jonathan Zwingina. The vote came after receipt of the report on the probe by the Senate Committee on Ethics and Privileges into the FCT Minister's allegations that Mantu and Zwingina asked him for a bribe to confirm him as Minister (reftel). Only seven of the Senate Committee's eleven members signed the report; the other members were said to be "unavailable" to sign it.

[12.](#) (SBU) The Committee report, published in the press, explicitly exonerated the 107 Senators not cited in El-Rufai's and others' testimony to the Committee. Several Senators have since publicly claimed that this exoneration was proof they are not corrupt (COMMENT: a dubious proposition in every sense). The Committee report noted that El-Rufai did not provide any documentation that the two Senators asked for the bribe, and therefore "in the strict, legal sense of proof, Malam El-Rufai did not directly prove his allegations." The report also stated that "Circumstantially, however, there are grounds to believe that the allegations are probably true." The report also noted that both Senators voted in favor of El-Rufai's confirmation. Senator Mantu has made public claims that El-Rufai was trying to defame him in revenge for an earlier slight, but the Committee noted the cordial relationship between the three men and found no motive why El-Rufai would choose the two Senators in question unless the allegations were true.

[13.](#) (U) Several groups and parties have already called for further investigation. The Conference of Nigerian Political Parties has asked Vice-President Atiku about his discussions with the Senate leading up to the confirmation. The AD and ANPP parties have petitioned the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission to investigate. The Arewa Consultative Forum (a Northern socio-political organization) and Afenifere (a South-West socio-political organization) have called for the two Senators to step down.

[14.](#) (SBU) Senator Mantu has commented in the press since the October 9 Senate vote to drop consideration of charges against him, but Senator Zwingina has not. Mantu publicly "forgave" El-Rufai, but darkly claimed that pressure was placed on him by the ruling PDP party leadership not to file a lawsuit against El-Rufai. El-Rufai has not made any further press statements. The PDP then formally invoking a party gag rule on the three individuals October 16, and that may be the end of the issue in public. For now.  
MEECE